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ABSTRACT

Bibliotherapy, the use of reading materials to examine one's personality, contributes to adjustment, growth, development, and remediation. Accordingly, social studies reading materials at both elementary and secondary levels have the potential for changing human behavior while transmitting knowledge, creating further interest among children in the social studies, and promoting a renewed emphasis on curriculum development and instruction in values education. For example, storytelling can maintain a personable and harmonious relationship between storyteller and audience. Many listeners might not have otherwise picked up a book to read for themselves; thus, storytelling reaches a number of children who might otherwise have been left out. Of immediate interest to social studies educators would be the improvement of social attitudes of regular students toward their handicapped peers. To date, however, little formal research on bibliotherapy and the social studies has occurred. Research is needed to determine which groups might best benefit from reading materials with identifiable social goals. (KC)

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Social Values, Interpersonal Relationships, Bibliotherapy, and the Social Studies

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Social Values, Interpersonal Relationships, Bibliotherapy, and the Social Studies[1]

Bibliotherapy is the purposeful use of books and other reading materials for examining one's personality while contributing to adjustment and growth, remediation and development. Its benefits are toward effecting changes in character, behavior, attitudes, and values, communicating ideas and affect, eliminating social problems, relieving social tensions, and transmitting the social, psychological, and aesthetic values of books to readers.[2] Accordingly, social studies' reading materials have the potential for changing human behavior while transmitting knowledge, creating further interest among children in the social studies, stimulating better teaching as the result of appreciating the effects of social studies reading on the student, and promoting a renewed emphasis in curriculum development and instruction on values education.[3]

Values Education and Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy's contribution to values education lies in its potential use for strengthening basic human values.

> School people, as agents of the democratic society, have special obligations to these values. The school in a pluralistic society has no business imposing lesser values, even if it could, but it is obligated to teach the basic values of the society. The use of literature and other materials that exemplify men's dedication to and the importance of our basic democratic values. . . should be an important part of the curriculum. . . .[4]

The basic human values referred to above are the values associated with the preservation of human dignity. These values include the right to life, due process, equal treatment by law, self-fulfillment, control over one's destiny, and the pursuit of happiness.[5] These basic human values are not subject to debate. Consequently, when the violations of

> . . .basic. . .values are so gross, as with our treatment of blacks and women. . .a teacher can only be seen as derelict in his duty if he maintains that his role is only to point out both sides of the issue.[6]

Other values are subject to differing adherences. These values range on a continuum from values that one would like to see in as many individuals as possible to values which are largely a matter of personal preference.[7] Bibliotherapy in these instances can be instrumental in decision-making just as it can be instrumental in the strengthening of basic human values. A person's mental and attitudinal outlook on life can be altered by selected readings counter to this outlook. Conflict is created. An ensuing drive leads one to reevaluate his/her previously held values and attitudes.[8] Accordingly, schools should feel an obligation to help students learn how to think and to make decisions about values involved in the valuing process.[9] As things stand, teachers necessarily teach values. Values are evident in the selection of content, teaching method, speech, and mannerisms. Transmission, though, is haphazard. The use of bibliotherapy in the classroom, on the other hand, can provide for some semblance of order. Hence, values education through books and other reading materials deserves further attention.

Bibliotherapy, Values, and the Storyteller

Storytelling is one mode of teaching about basic human values and other more personal values in the social studies among elementary and secondary school children. Selected social studies reading materials could very well demonstrate basic human values while also providing a basis for decisions on the other more personal questions of preference. In this sense, bibliotherapy in the social studies could be tremendously effective in the development of the child in both immediate and long range terms.

In anticipation of sharing reading in the social studies, an appeal is made first of all to the student's probable awareness that a common bond of interest must necessarily exist with him/herself, the reader, and the story. The feeling for the student is one of pleasure. The fact that the book will be read word for word indicates to the student that the book must have some worth. Since a common interest has brought the reader, listener, and book together and since the book must necessarily carry with it an aura of importance, rapport is instantaneously established between the reader and the listener.[10] Once the reading has begun and the first few words have been spoken, the attention of the child is permanently fixed on the unfolding of the story.

> . . .words spoken capture the imagination, reach an emotional depth, and satisfy even before there is a full comprehension of the substance read. The glorious sound of words, the rhythm of words spoken together, the clarion or the hushed quality of the voice--all these can hold the attention of a young mind while it grows in understanding.[11]

Unhampered also by the mechanical and technical difficulties that students sometime experience in reading for themselves, attention is

further assured when a book is read as a story to the child.

Having established contact with the audience, the storyteller or reader can maintain a personable and harmonious relationship with the listeners as a consequence of being able to see the responses of his or her audience. As such, the reader of a selection has the option of improvising and moving with the inspiration of the moment.[12] The purposeful use of voice through inflection, pitch, and timing can lead to heightened expectations, laughter, wonder, thought, and as a consequence deeper awareness. So powerful is the impact of reading aloud to an audience that the mood created is strictly the choice of the reader. Accordingly, the affective and cognitive ramifications of reading books as stories to students can be tremendous. Reading is not a simple ". . .sharing of the mind alone, but rather a sharing of heart and spirit. . . ."[13] Reading aloud, then, has as its greatest strength the power to evoke emotion while also evoking a deeper intellectual understanding. Just as there is no cognitive understanding without affect, there is no affect without cognitive understanding. In so doing, the story has greater reality for the child and an impression is made that might not have otherwise been made.

> It is not through formal instructions that a child receives his impulses toward virtue, honor, and courtesy. It is rather from such appeal to the emotions as can be made most effectively through the telling of a story.[14]

The impact is particularly significant when it is realized that many of the listeners might not have otherwise picked up a book in the social studies to read for themselves. Accordingly, the social studies storyteller can take satisfaction in knowing that a number of children were reached who might not have been reached had they been left to their

own initiative.

Research, Bibliotherapy, and the Social Studies

Interestingly enough, little formal research has been done in bibliotherapy with the social studies student.[15] Current knowledge about affective response and the influence of literature on the reader is fragmented and intuitive.[16] Of the research that has been done, most of it is in the form of anecdotal records and case studies. In such studies, the validity and reliability of findings are questionable because control groups are not utilized. Likewise, little can be generalized beyond the parameters of any particular study. Nevertheless, the evidence that has been gathered on the use of bibliotherapy in the classroom and in psychotherapeutic contexts suggests that

> . . .it is a useful adjunct to the more traditional techniques of the practitioner. Surprisingly, not a single study found bibliotherapy to be ineffective. No one has attacked the use of bibliotherapy on theoretical or ethical grounds either.[17]

Even the more recent quasi-experimental studies have generally found some positive effect associated with bibliotherapy. Accordingly, more study needs to be done to determine the specific effects of reading under varying conditions and as further scientific validation of earlier anecdotal evidence.

One specific instance of needed research is with the average child in the elementary grade classroom.[18] In fact, the entire field of children's literature in the social studies as an area for research is only newly recognized and hence is an area where considerable research has yet to be accumulated.[19] In coming to grips with a number of realities affecting personal decision-making and basic values,

schools are having to formulate clear and concrete social objectives. Because bibliotherapy is one of the few systematic possibilities for dealing with attitudinal change, it should be given further attention. While it is neither highly technical, expensive, or time-consuming, it is at the same time very easily accessible by all teachers and school systems.[20] If bibliotherapy is to become a useful technique in the social studies, then a series of studies must be conducted in order to determine those groups of youngsters who might best benefit from pre-selected lists of reading materials with identifiable social goals.

Social Values and the Handicapped

Of immediate interest to social studies educators might be a study of the impact of bibliotherapy on the improvement of the social attitudes of regular students toward their handicapped peers. Public Law 94-142 makes this an inevitable situation for the testing of basic human values. Currently, there is next to nothing in the research pertaining to the use of bibliotherapy to influence the attitudes of regular school children toward their handicapped peers.[21] This is an important area of investigation and should not go unstudied especially in light of what others have said could be the tremendous effects of selected social studies materials on attitudes. The Federal Law, 94-142, specifies that all handicapped children must be provided with access to a free public education and that instruction must take place in the least restrictive environment. For the most part, this means the integration of handicapped children with regular children. Consequently, because of the potential transfer of many handicapped children into regular classes,

> . . .it is important to understand, and hopefully to improve, the predominantly negative attitudes of the nonhandicapped peer group into which the handicapped child will be placed.[22]

This between group difference in attitudes has even been found among pre kindergarten children. The attitude tends to reflect the negative attitudes held by the child's parents which, in turn, are also characteristic of the general public's attitude toward handicapped individuals.[23]

It is for certain that the school reality of P.L. 94-142 must be dealt with in the future. Perhaps bibliotherapy in the social studies with its ease of application and inexpensiveness can help in making the transition to mainstreamed classrooms while also helping to fortify and give credence to the development of basic human values in our students.

NOTES

[1]This paper is based partially on a dissertation, "The Effects of Using Fiction in Bibliotherapy to Alter the Attitudes of Regular Third Grade Students Toward Their Handicapped Peers," completed by the author at the University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, Missouri, 1979.

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[4]James P. Shaver, Values and Schooling: Perspectives for School People and Parents (Logan, UT: Utah State University, 1972): p. 26.

[5]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[6]Ibid., p. 24.

[7]Ibid., p. 5.

[8]Irving L. Jones and Bert T. King, "A Conflict-Theory Approach to Attitude Change and Decision-Making," in Psychological Foundations of Attitudes, ed. A. G. Greenwald et al. (New York: Academic Press, 1968): pp. 327-360, cited by Peter Suedfield, ed., Attitude Change: The Contemporary Views (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, Inc., 1971): p. 44.

[9]Shaver, Values and Schooling, p. 24.

[10]Edna Lyman, Story Telling (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1910): p. 35.

[11]Ruth Sawyer, "On Reading The Bible Aloud," The Horn Book 21 (March-April 1945): 104.

[12]Idem, The Way of the Storyteller (New York: Viking Press, 1962): p. 31.

[13]Lore Hirsch, "How A Doctor Uses Books," Library Journal 75 (December 1950): 2046.

[14]Lyman, Story Telling, p. 15.

[15]Louis E. Raths, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney B. Simon, Values and Teaching: Working With Values in the Classroom (Columbus, OH.: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1966): p. 191.

[16]James R. Squire, The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories, NCTE Research Report, No. 2 (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1964): p. 3; Linda Berg-Cross and Gary Berg-Cross, "Listening to Stories May Change Children's Social Attitudes," The Reading Teacher 31 (March 1978): 659.

[17]Joseph S. Zaccaria and Harold A. Moses, Facilitating Human Development Through Reading: The Use of Bibliotherapy in Teaching and Counseling (Champaign, Ill.: Stipes Publishing Co., 1968): p. 41.

[18]Mary-Ellen Meegan, "Bibliotherapeutic Facets in Literature for Children," Dissertation Abstracts International 37 (August 1976): 787A; Jacquelyn W. Stephens, An Investigation Into the Effectiveness of Bibliotherapy on the Reader's Self-Reliance (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 103 824, 1975): p. 5; Interview with Linnea D. Lilja, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, Missouri 14 November 1977.

[19]Lilja, Interview, 14 November 1977.

[20]Dorothy Kraft Livengood, "The Effect of Bibliotherapy Upon Peer Relations and Democratic Practices in a Sixth Grade Classroom," Dissertation Abstracts 25 (November 1964): 3437.

[21]Donna A. Beardsley, "Using books to Change Attitudes Toward the Handicapped Among Third Graders," Journal of Experimental Education 50 (Winter 1981-1982): 52-55.

[22]Jay Gottlieb and Barbara W. Gottlieb, "Stereotypic Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions Toward Handicapped Children," American Journal of Mental Deficiency 82 (July 1977): 65.

[23]Paul T. Rankin, "Reading and Intergroup Understandings, Appreciations, Adjustments," in Promoting Personal and Social Development Through Reading, ed. William S. Gray, Supplementary Educational Monographs, Vol. 9, No. 64, October (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947): p. 154.